

**Remarks of Indiana Lt. Governor Becky Skillman**  
**about the Indiana Telehealth Network at Decatur County Memorial Hospital**  
*Event was part of the Lt. Governor's Hoosier Crossroads Tour*

Thanks for your hospitality. And Becky thanks for the kind words, and for being a long time champion for our rural communities.

Great to be here today with our partners' progress - hospital staff, Indiana Telehealth Network staff, IRHA, and local officials. Today we celebrate the progress of Decatur County and the hospital in the Indiana Telehealth Network.

We're thankful for the leadership of county officials and local economic development. We appreciate the time, effort and resources they have committed to make this venture successful as well. They know firsthand that the development of one county provides a boost to the entire region.

Just over a year ago I was here to announce the start of the Indiana Telehealth Network. In October we celebrated the latest addition to the Indiana Telehealth Network, St. Vincent Hospital in Williamsport – proud to see the network expanding, serving Hoosiers better.

We're very proud of the work being done here at Decatur County Memorial. Participating in the Indiana Telehealth Network has allowed leaders to leverage existing fiber optics and connect this hospital to important new services.

Now connected to the IU Health and IRHA telestroke network, Decatur County's critical access hospital has the resources to treat stroke victims faster and more effectively than ever before. Via web camera and phone, doctors here are just a few clicks away from neurologists and specialists in Indianapolis.

And this facility is also connected to mental health professionals in Bloomington. Video conferencing will again afford timely and appropriate care to ER patients in need of mental health services, and that video service can help speed up the transfer process if inpatient help is needed.

Decatur memorial is also becoming a video conferencing host site next year for the Indiana Rural Health Association. The IRHA has been a strong private partner in this program, and I want to thank our leaders there and all your member institutions for your hard work. Also thank the Indiana Telecommunications Association. Our state Office of Technology and Office of Community and Rural Affairs have also collaborated to make the Indiana Telehealth Network (ITN) possible.

As you know, the Telehealth Network connects rural hospitals with high-speed, fiber-optic broadband. Broadband is the most reliable way to get health information from point A to point B. And it's been our goal in state government, for some time now, to get every city and town online.

So it's not just better health care we can celebrate, we're also celebrating better communications for Decatur County. The benefits for individuals, families, and businesses are tremendous. And when that level of communication is available to our health care providers, it takes an already excellent system to a whole new level of service.

One of our best resources to improve health care is technology. And Indiana is at the forefront. We're quickly outpacing the rest of the nation, as more and more of our hospitals are able to access each other's patient information electronically.

This new network opens doors for doctors and patients to access specialty services anywhere in the state, nation, or world. Telemedicine makes it faster and easier to diagnose and treat patients.

And of course, it takes away the need for patients to travel to see a doctor. Especially in our small cities and towns, the distance to urban hospitals can be a barrier to receiving proper treatment. The network will allow rural Hoosiers to stay close to home and keep their dollars close to home as well.

I want to thank the hospitals for serving as home base for broadband in their communities. Not only will you provide better service to your patients, you'll open doors for better connectivity throughout the community.

Health care facilities with telemedicine have shown great returns on their investment, not only financially, but in doctor/patient convenience and satisfaction.

This network represents an important step forward for rural communities, for our health care system, and for our ongoing statewide development.